

Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight: Discovering a Statue

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Big Ideas: Investigate how art represents history.

Essential Questions: Why does a nine-foot bronze cast sculpture of President Abraham Lincoln stand outside of the West Virginia State Capitol building? Does poetry influence artists? How does sculpture tell a story?

West Virginia Social Studies Standards

SS.5.WV.4 sequence the events that led to the formation of the state of West Virginia (e.g., timeline).

SS.5.WV.5 identify and explain the significance of historical experiences and of geographical, social and economic factors that have helped to shape both West Virginia's and America's society.

SS.5.WV.6 analyze the moral, ethical and legal tensions that led to the creation of the new state of West Virginia and how those tensions were resolved.

Visual Arts Standards

VA.O.5.4.01 identify the characteristics of artworks and artists from different periods of time, style and cultures.

VA.O.5.4.02 describe and place artifacts, artworks, and/or artists on a historical and/or cultural timeline.

VA.O.5.4.03 describe how time and place influence meaning and cultural value in a work of art.

Learning Plan

During social studies/history time or in cooperation with the social studies/history teacher, students must have developed the content background knowledge of the role President Lincoln played in the statehood of West Virginia. Special attention should be addressed to the events

leading up to Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Statehood Bill granting approval to western Virginians to seek admission to the Union on December 31, 1862.

In small groups (3-5), students will either walk through the West Virginia State Museum together or look at items. What imagery or words come to mind as you read, examine or look at these items?

Three art projects are presented. The first, two dimensional, is best suited to be carried out by a classroom teacher. The second is more suited to a teacher comfortable with creating three-dimensional art.

Art Project 1

To begin this lesson, the teacher will divide the class into several groups to define the following words: **portentous, mourning, quaint, peasants, dreadnaught, and travail** which are found in the poem they are about to hear. The students will report back to the class the definitions of the words. A brief background of the relationship Lincoln has to our statehood and the current events happening while he served as president will be reviewed. Students will know that the poem is written about a time after Lincoln's death and coinciding with the inception of World War I. Ask the students to discuss how he must be feeling. Tell them you are going to read a poem that is about Lincoln and that when it is over, they will draw Lincoln as they picture him in their mind. Explain to them they will see the actual sculpture made by West Virginia artist, Fred Martin Torrey, who was born in Fairmont, West Virginia. The [original statue](#), now in the West Virginia State Museum, is 42" tall. It was originally presented at New York World's Fair in 1939. Pennies raised by the children of West Virginia paid for the statue to be cast in bronze and stands nine feet tall. The statue was cast after Fred Torrey's death in 1974 by Charleston, West Virginia artist, Bernie Wiepper, and is located in front of our State Capitol.

Read the poem "[Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight](#)". Give each student a 4 ½" by 12" sheet of black construction paper and a white colored pencil. Point out Lincoln has a shawl or overcoat in the poem and probably a concerned face. Allow them to draw. When students have completed their drawings, read the poem again so they may add details to their drawings. Some questions to follow up with are:

1. Do leaders have concerns for the people they serve?
2. What is the expression on the face of the sculpture?
3. Why doesn't the sculpture figure have a hat since the poem mentions his hat?

Students will view the [bronze statue](#) Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight. The students will discuss the similarities and differences in their drawing and the sculpture by Torrey. The teacher will present the photo of the larger statue that is in front of the capitol.

Students will learn about the events leading up to the dedication of the large statue with a timeline.

Art Project 2

This art lesson is for students to recreate the sculpture with self-hardening clay, ceramic clay, or paper Mâché. Each student should make a ball using self-hardening clay and form a face that depicts worry or deep concern. A wire armature can be formed for the body and a cloth soaked in a mixture of glue and water can be draped over the armature to represent Lincoln's "shawl." For ceramic clay, no armature can be used.

Art Project 3

Newspaper [articles](#) are part of this lesson packet. Students will be interested to learn that it was school children from Wyoming County who raised \$1,030.00 for the project. It was said they [raised pennies](#) since it is Lincoln's picture that is shown on the coin. In this art related project, students will design their own coin on a round template.

Students will each be given a penny with Lincoln's image. The class will discuss all the parts of the coin. They will [create their coin](#) modeled after the penny. Students will be given the task of identifying an important person and draw a profile of that person, select a value for a coin, a slogan and a date of issue. The front of the coin or both sides can be designed by the students. The profiles can be limited to prominent figures in West Virginia history, their community, or other criteria.

Materials and Other Resources

Abbie Betinis: [Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight](#)

The Historical Marker Database: [Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight](#)

e-WV Encyclopedia [Fred Martin Torrey](#) article

United States Mint [Circulating Coins](#)

Abraham Lincoln in Singable [Picture Books](#)

Vachel Lindsay's poem "[Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight](#)"

Historical Timeline [Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight](#) events